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NEWS RELEASE

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**PSC APPROVES CHANGES TO IMPROVE TELECOMMUNICATION
SERVICES FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

More funding will go to purchase equipment

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 31, 2006) – The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) today approved a revised funding formula that will increase the availability of telecommunications equipment for the deaf and hard of hearing while reducing the overall surcharge assessed on all telephone customers in Kentucky.

“Today we have taken a major step toward the goal of making the global telecommunication network accessible to everyone in Kentucky,” PSC Chairman Mark David Goss said. “The technology is available. This will help get it to those who need it.”

In an order issued today, the PSC, as permitted by the 2006 Kentucky General Assembly, increased the monthly surcharge for the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP), from one cent per telephone access line per month to two cents per month.

At the same time, the PSC reduced the monthly surcharge for Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) from nine cents per month to seven cents per month. That reduces the overall surcharge from 10 cents per month to nine cents per month.

The TAP fund, formerly known as the Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf Distribution Program (TDD) fund, is used to provide specialized devices that enable the deaf and hard of hearing to communicate via the telephone. These devices, which are provided at no cost to the user, include amplified telephones, captioned phones and other equipment.

The TRS program enables those persons with specialized devices to communicate with those who do not have such equipment. Together, TAP and TRS allow full access to the telephone system for the deaf and hard of hearing.

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Kentucky is home to about 400,000 of the 28 million Americans who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, executive director of the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, said the reallocation of the TAP/TRS surcharge will channel funding to where it is most needed.

“The biggest challenge is making this equipment available to everyone who is eligible to receive it,” she said. “It may be hard to imagine that shifting a penny would make much difference, but in fact this will have a significant impact by doubling the available funds to assist Kentuckians with hearing loss.”

Scoggins noted that the funds assist a wide range of Kentucky residents, including more than 30 who are over 100 years old.

Annual payments into the TDD fund have been about \$265,000. The TAP fund will collect more than \$500,000 each year.

TRS fund revenue will decline from about \$2.2 million to about \$1.7 million. Because per-minute charges for using the TRS system have declined, as has usage, the lower amount will be sufficient to maintain service.

The surcharge is assessed on landline service only. The two-cents-per-line TAP surcharge will remain in effect from July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2008, unless it is extended by the General Assembly.

Today's order is available on the PSC Web site, psc.ky.gov.

The PSC is an agency within the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and has approximately 110 employees.

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